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IF, THEN, AND WHEN,

FROM THE

DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH.

BY

WARREN SUMNER BARLOW,

AUTHOR OF

"THE VOICES," AND OTHER POEMS.

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IF THEN, AND WHEN.



IF the God of all perfection,
Infinite in love and power,
Knew the end from the beginning,
As He comprehends an hour—

Modeled man in His own image,
Clothed him with His love and truth,
Cheered him with His benediction,
Crowned him with immortal youth—

If the Devil from high heaven,
God's archangel from His throne,
Stole this image of perfection,
Single-handed and alone—

If this God of blissful Eden,
Thus defeated in His plan,
Grieved in sorrow, cursed His offspring,
And repented making man—

If to rescue man from Satan,
Failing first, He sent His son,
With the suicidal off'ring
Of the God-head, three in one :

[*Suicidal ?* do you ask me ?—
By *Himself*, His death was planned ;
By His *will*, His life was taken,
As if taken by His hand.

Angels were at His disposal—
Legions of them at His will ;
But His death by His appointment,
Only could His mission fill.

Yet if Jesus was but *mortal*,
And like other martyrs died,

In the cause of human progress,
 This plain truth is not denied.

But if Jesus was *Jehovah*,
 And the *means* by which He died,
Like His death were self-determined,
 God is then a suicide !]

Who can measure such delusion ?
 How could Satan make it worse ?
Oh let reason brand the falsehood,
 To *believe* it, is the curse !

Jesus in His sad departure,
 From the cross on Calvary,
In loud accents cried, " My Father,
 Why hast Thou forsaken me ? "

If a *skeptic*, when departing,
 Should rehearse that doleful knell,
Every narrow-minded preacher
 Would consign his soul to hell !

And the Church with exultation
 Would proclaim it far and wide,
As a proof that he recanted,
 And with condemnation died.

Skepticism—friend of progress—
 Source from which new truths unfold,
Foretaste of a hopeful future,
 More than prophet hath foretold.

Jesus was a noble skeptic,
 And denounced the darkened past—
Boldly, higher truths revealing,
 He was sacrificed at last.

Then, as now, benighted bigots
 Would the heights of progress storm ;
Would debar the light of heaven,
 From all leaders of reform.

Cutting short His earthly mission,
 Jesus joins the heavenly band—

Mounts the throne of the Eternal,
And thus pleads at God's right hand :

“ Oh, my Father, let not anger
Longer breathe eternal death ;
May compassion and forgiveness
Warm Thy cold, relentless breath !

“ Oh, restore the race of Adam
To their high primeval state ;
Why must Satan longer hold them
As the subjects of Thy hate ?

“ Thy vindictive wrath hath ever
Sharpened Satan's fiery blade ;
With two foes thus single-handed
Darkness doth my hopes invade.

“ Darkness doleful and eternal,
Where the lost will curse their sire,
As they rise upon the billows
Of their boundless lake of fire.”

Thus the yearly contest rages
 With its eighteen hundred rounds;
Each to gather in their subjects,
 When at last the trumpet sounds.

If, despite the triune God-head,
 As we read, “but few are saved,”
And the race yet “heirs of Satan,”
 Still is “totally depraved”—

Then the powers of the Eternal
 Are corrupted at their source ;
And God’s purposes are blasted
 By a self-destructive force !

From one source came all existence ;
 From one cause came all effects ;
From one centre universal
 All unfolds as cause directs.

If two sources, good and evil,
 Seem to wage a war on earth,

One must antedate Jehovah,
Else Jehovah gave it birth.

Surely both cannot be senior,
And the God whom we adore,
Infinite in love and wisdom,
Never hath a demon bore!

Satan—hoary myth of ages,
How thy hackneyed visage pales—
Too transparent for a shadow,
Where the light of truth prevails.

If from God's divine dominions
Came the Devil—strange to tell—
To invade the bowers of Eden,
Capture earth, and people hell—

If the great primeval Fountain—
Source of purity and love,
Pours a flood of foul corruption
From its pearly gates above—

Then the universal standard
Of all logic is reversed ;
And to be endowed with reason,
Is to be profoundly cursed !

If the few ordained for heaven
Were determined ere their birth,
How could Jesus save another
By His cruel death on earth ?

If the masses doomed to burnings
Were created for their fate,
To secure another victim
Even *Satan* came too late.

Hell and Satan—strange delusions—
Blinders to the sense of thought,
Millstones to the necks of mortals,
Which an age of darkness wrought.

Can the errors of a moment,
On the ebbing wave of time,

Doom immortal souls forever,
To a dark abyssmal clime?

Yet no sin can go unpunished,
While all virtue brings rewards ;
Vice and virtue each receiving
Their legitimate awards.

Pain and pleasure—truthful teachers—
Equal partners in our cause ;
One to *lead*, and one to *guide* us,
Ruled by heaven's benignant laws.

Thus all wayward, doubting mortals
Are like children taught the way
To a better understanding
Of the laws they must obey.

By these loving admonitions
Every soul will learn to rise
From the lowest depths of folly
To the wisdom of the skies.

If there be but one immortal
Doomed to everlasting pain,
The disaster is appalling,
And all hope in God is vain !

If the infinite Jehovah,
By a fragment of His power,
Was defeated in His purpose
In a weak unguarded hour—

If the Great First Cause of causes,
By a plan He did project,
Was invaded by disaster,
Thwarted by its dire effect—

Then farewell to all our logic ;
All our schools of thought may pause ;
All our highest hopes are blasted,
By *effects* defeating *cause* !

When a grain outweighs a mountain,
Or a stream o'erflows its source ;

Or the shadow of an object,
Takes its prototype by force—

When the moon, in sunbeams floating
O'er the ebon arc of night,
Far out-rivals all the glory
Of her only source of light—

When the dust outrides the tempest,
And the raging storm defies,
Or a fragment of a sunbeam
Rules the monarch of the skies—

When we bar the boundless ages
By a single thread of time,
Or a breath of fancied discord
Breaks the universal chime—

Then the strange, delusive story
May be better understood,
Of a self-appointed rival
To the fountain of all good!

By effects we learn of causes,
As by fruit we learn the tree,
While the product of all forces
With their sources must agree.

But as no effect is equal
To the cause which doth project,
If the Devil was created
He must suffer this defect.

Then what greater power than Satan
Brought him forth in vile tirade?
He must be, if reason serves us,
By a bigger Devil made.

If to thus expose these errors
Seems to savor of abuse,
How much *worse to entertain* them
And to *bring them into use!*

Ignorance and superstition
To the Evil One gave birth ;

Common sense with common reason
Drives the Devil from the earth.

Yet if Satan were discarded
From all pulpits in the land,
Not one preacher in a thousand
Could his absence long withstand.

Some may question this assertion,
Saying, "Christ is all in all,"
While the battle still is raging
For the victims of the fall.

Hence, to sever Christ from Satan
Ends forever the device
Of redemption from the Devil
By atoning sacrifice!

The atonement!—vain conception—
Cause and comforter of crime—
Opiate to good endeavor—
Bohem Upas tree of time!

Oh, how many crimes are nurtured,
Lured and led by this device ;
Murderers upon the gallows
Swing from earth to paradise !

Still this potent source of error
Is the bulwark of the creeds ;
To *believe* it is religion,
Rather than fraternal deeds.

And oppression's gilded fortress,
Like an adamantine wall,
Bids defiance to the thoughtful,
Ruling or denouncing all.

Thus while truth was dimly burning,
Stifled in a loathsome vault,
And the age of superstition
Bade the march of truth to halt—

Then the weary thinkers pondered,
With their faces to the skies ;

And with hopes and fears were tortured,
As they reasoned in this wise :

“ If God chose to save and *could* not,
Frailty coupled good intent ;
If He really *could* and would not,
Vengeance He ordained and sent.

“ Thus the doors of hope are bolted
By the rusty locks of time ;
For we want no God of weakness,
While we spurn a God of crime !

“ If there be a God, His purpose
Naught of evil can befall ;
To believe in any other,
Better have no God at all ! ”

Then the angels, ever watchful,
Listened as in love they came ;
Through their hopes and fears they entered,
With a spark of heavenly flame.

Like a burning constellation,
Like the sun in gloom of night,
Like the beams of untold glory,
Winged this new-fledged orb of light.

It illumed the darkened corners,
Error sped before its flight,
And the voice of truth and reason
Welcomed this effulgent light.

Bigotry and superstition
Faded like dissolving views ;
In their stead came firm endeavor,
To examine and to choose.

God was then proclaimed our Father :
By His *wisdom* all was planned ;
By His *love* His will was written ;
By His *power* it e'er will stand.

By fraternal deeds we triumph,
As by truth we learn to rise ;

While in our illumined pathway
Naught but error ever dies.

As we scatter wheat or thistles,
We must gather what we sow ;
No less true in heaven's dominions
Than in earthly spheres below.

Laws immutable forever
Span the universe sublime ;
While the same unerring standard
Permeates the laws of time.

Oh, despondent, creed-bound brother,
Break the fetters that entwine,
Rise to freedom from oppression
To an atmosphere divine !

There among the countless millions
No archangel e'er can fall ;
Upward, onward—A forever
Is the destiny of all.

Can the transient deeds of mortals,
On this frail and fickle shore,
Rivet all the coming ages
To a changeless evermore ?

If there be a fixed condition,
Where no higher truths are taught,
Where the soul will perch forever
On its topmost round of thought—

Then dissolve my aspirations
With this tenement of dust ;
Better far annihilation,
Than *eternally to rust !*

Or, if Satan, while an angel,
To the burning regions fell ;
Angels all may yet be Devils,
And all Paradise a hell !

Cease ! oh, mortals, cease to languish
In this barren field of thought,

Where the myths of superstition
Into dismal creeds are wrought.

For the all-pervading fountain
Lights our hopes with holy fires ;
New attainments ever bringing
With new pleasures, new desires.

Unborn ages still to greet us,
With new glories to unfold—
Co-eternal with Jehovah,
Ever telling, *never told*.

Testimonials.

*From the many critical notices and reviews of "THE VOICES,"
we have only room for a few brief extracts.*

Judge BAKER of New York, in his elaborate review of "THE VOICES," says: "Considered in the light of a controversial or didactic poem, it is without an equal in contemporaneous literature—the birth of an audacious mind, and is destined to excite greater and more wide encircling waves of sectarian agitation than any anti-creedal work ever published."

Prof. S. B. BRITTAN, in his able review of the work, says: "In the Voice of Nature the author gives us a clearer insight into his own views of the material world, of human nature and God. He has a rational philosophy of the relations of mind and matter, and his theology is at once natural and charitable. He recognizes one God everywhere, present alike in the physical world and in His moral universe. The God he adores, and his strong faith in the goodness that rules the world, are clearly revealed and forcibly expressed in the following paraphrastic and poetical rendering of a beautiful passage in the Sermon on the Mount.

Will He who hears the ravens when they cry,
Mock and deride thee when no hope is nigh?
Will He who clothes the lilies of the field,
That neither toil, nor spin, nor raiment yield;
Who feeds the fowls that never reap nor sow—
Extends His watchful care where'er they go?
Will He who clothes the grass which is to-day,
While all its beauty quickly fades away,
Forget His image—His immortal child!
Is he alone derided and defiled?
Or left to tread the downward thoroughfare,
With Satan to bewilder and ensnare,
And urge him on to death and dark despair?
"O, ye of little faith!" *let reason sway:*
Are not your souls more precious far than they?

WILLIAM H. BURLEIGH, a well-known author and poet, in one of his contributions to the *Chicago Evening Post*, thus speaks of the author and "THE VOICES:" "That he is a bold, earnest man, with very pronounced opinions, that he has a combative and incisive way of stating those opinions, and that, below all seeming antagonism to the letter of old creeds, he accepts the spirit of the new dispensation, his book furnishes abundant evidence. His verse is generally characterized by vigor, and at times glides with a true rhythmic flow and rings with a genuine poetic harmony."



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BY

WARREN SUMNER BARLOW.

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